

This article was downloaded by: [Ben Gurion University of the Negev]
On: 02 March 2015, At: 11:44
Publisher: Routledge
Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954
Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH,
UK



Loisir et Société / Society and Leisure

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rles20>

Conceptualizing E-leisure

Galit Nimrod^a & Hanna Adoni^b

^a Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel

^b Herzlia Interdisciplinary Center, Israel

Published online: 02 Jul 2013.

To cite this article: Galit Nimrod & Hanna Adoni (2012) Conceptualizing E-leisure, *Loisir et Société / Society and Leisure*, 35:1, 31-56, DOI:

[10.1080/07053436.2012.10707834](https://doi.org/10.1080/07053436.2012.10707834)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07053436.2012.10707834>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan,

sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

CONCEPTUALIZING E-LEISURE

Galit NIMROD*

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel

Hanna ADONI

Herzlia Interdisciplinary Center, Israel

Introduction

History has shown that human behaviours are influenced by the tools they use (Henrickson, 2000). Accordingly, Harold Innis (1951) and Marshall McLuhan (1964), the founding fathers of the Toronto School of Technological Determinism, have argued that changes in major media of communication transform entire civilizations. Media scholars following in their footsteps (Baudrillard, 1983; Blondheim, 2003; Meyrowitz, 1985; Postman, 1982) have demonstrated in their theoretical writings as well as in their empirical research how the new digital media, and television in particular, affects modern societies on both the micro and the macro levels. Notwithstanding the critique of this approach by more historically and socially oriented researchers (Eisenstein, 1979; Goody, 1968; Goody & Watt, 1963), it has been one of the most influential trends in communication research (Watson & Blondheim, 2007).

* The Authors wish to express their appreciation to the anonymous reviewers, the editor of this special issue, Dr. Linda L. Caldwell of Pennsylvania State University, and Dr. Douglas A. Kleiber of the University of Georgia for their useful suggestions throughout the preparation of this manuscript.

The emergence and widespread diffusion of Internet usage have triggered new interest in the effect of new media technologies on social behaviour. The new information and communication technologies, personal computers, Internet and mobile phones, have profoundly and radically changed norms and practices in all life domains. Among other influences, they affected and are still transforming individuals' access to leisure and culture, leisure behaviours and experiences. They have changed the ways in which people spend their time, determine their cultural preferences and develop their social ties and networks (Bryce, 2001; Cheng, 2006). These new technologies are used as a source of information and entertainment, offering many enjoyable activities such as games, online education, shopping, dating, blogging and many more. Such activities are often described as "online leisure", "cyber leisure", "virtual leisure" or simply "E-leisure".

The most crucial difference between traditional offline leisure and E-leisure is in their spatial aspect. While traditional leisure activities are performed in the material, physical and social world we recognize with our senses and in which we behave according to our life experience and common sense (Berger & Luckmann, 1967), E-leisure is performed in "cyberspace". This elusive concept has been discussed widely by various scholars and we shall mention only few examples. Bauwens (1994) suggested that cyberspace is a place where we are involved in computer-mediated communications, while Roberts, Smith and Pollock (2002) contend that it is the location of mediated interactions in unspecified environments. Farmer's (1989) definition is especially relevant for conceptualizing e-leisure, as he suggests that it is "[...] a place, not just an interface or a metaphor. A place where people regardless of location or purpose can get together in participatory experience to conduct business, socialize or have a good game of SpaceCombat."

New media scholars often relate to E-leisure as one sub-set of online activities. In contrast, leisure scholars refer to it as one of the sub-sets of leisure activities. Some writers group them as one activity when exploring individuals' Internet use or their leisure repertoire, whereas others focus on specific online activities and study their unique characteristics. In the past two decades numerous studies have explored activities such as online gaming (e.g., Chang & Zhang, 2008), dating (e.g., Lawson & Leck, 2006) or participating in virtual communities (e.g., Nimrod, 2010). Yet, only a few scholars have addressed the *essence* of E-leisure, differentiating it from what we recognise as traditional offline leisure. To our knowledge, only one writer has ever wondered "whether cyber-spatial leisure can, in fact, be conceptualized as leisure at all" (Miah, 2000, p. 211).

Since E-leisure challenges conventional conceptions of reality, spatiality, time, geography and sexuality, it calls for new modes of understanding (Aitchison, 1999). Based on the principal components of leisure studies

and new media research, this article aims to conceptualise E-leisure and to explore its distinctive qualities. We begin by examining the relevance of core aspects of leisure for conceptualizing E-leisure, and then consider which dimensions related to the core aspects of traditional leisure are relevant to E-leisure and which have lost significance. We proceed to suggest new aspects required for further understanding of E-leisure, which had undergone a process of mediatization, namely, was reshaped by and increasingly dependent on media (Krotz, 2008, 2009). We conclude with a discussion of the implications of the “mediatization” of leisure and directions for future research.

Core Aspects and Related Dimensions of Leisure Shared by Traditional Offline Leisure and E-leisure

The basic core defining aspects of leisure are: (a) time, (b) action (activities and patterns of cultural behaviour), and (c) experience (c.f., Katz, *et al.*, 2000; Kelly, 1996). We contend that all of these three core aspects are highly relevant in conceptualizing E-leisure, yet they differ in the degree and the nature of the dimensions related to them. By examining these dimensions in the next section, we demonstrate that many of them are relevant, albeit in varying degrees, to both offline and online leisure, while others have lost significance in E-leisure.

The Time Aspect of Leisure and Related Dimensions

When defining leisure as *time*, scholars usually refer to leisure as residual, or leftover, time. This time is what is left after completing all duties (e.g., work and home chores) and necessary activities (e.g., eating and sleeping), and it is always conceptualized as a part of the general amount of time available to each individual. Leisure time is distinguished by its being relatively free from obligations and by a high level of choice. Specifically, it is distinct from work, and often perceived as compensation for work (Parker, 1971).

Two dimensions strongly associated with time are the *frequency* and the *duration* of participation. The first describes how often one is involved in an activity (e.g., twice a week) and the latter measures how long the participation lasts (e.g., an hour). Patterns of participation in both traditional and E-leisure can vary both on the micro level of the individuals and on the macro level of communities and societies. On the micro level, an individual may read a daily newspaper every morning for twenty minutes, and check an online news site every hour for a couple of minutes during working hours. On the macro level, in societies with better access to new technologies, the overall amount of time dedicated to online activities is higher and creates the “Digital Divide” between developing and developed countries (Castells, 2002).

Leisure time may not necessarily be concentrated time (after work and home chores or on weekends). It can be dispersed among work and other non-leisure activities. We sometimes have leisure at work, for example during breaks, and we work during leisure, for example, when we get a phone call from our boss during dinner. Individuals' lifestyles may vary with regard to the level of separation they have between leisure and other life domains.

E-leisure has significantly decreased the *distinctiveness* of leisure as time. The ubiquity of computers and online Internet both at home and at work settings, as well as in cafés, hotels, trains and busses, enables individuals to enjoy leisure activities in the midst and along with their working and commuting activities. It seems that in a reality of a wired world, the traditional boundaries between work and leisure hardly exist anymore (Lightman, 2005). We chat, play and check the news while we are at work; and check our e-mails or follow up on work related issues (such as market trends) while we are at leisure.

The Action Aspect of Leisure and Related Dimensions

Defining leisure as *action*, an activity and/or a cultural behavior, refers to what people choose to *do* in their free time or, in other words, to the various types of activities and cultural behaviors that commonly possess connotations of leisure. Investigating leisure as action provides descriptive pictures of forms and contents of leisure (e.g., physical, intellectual, social or creative; formal or informal; solitary or interacting with others; highbrow or popular; associated with various media). As we elaborate below, many of these dimensions are just as relevant to E-leisure activities and can be usefully applied in its conceptualization.

One dimension related to the activity core aspect is the *social dimension of leisure activities*. Leisure studies distinguish between solitary and social activities (e.g., Litwin, 2001), as well as between different types of social activities (intimate, group and mass leisure). Such distinctions are applicable to E-leisure as well. Even though E-leisure participants often appear to be alone in the physical world, they may be interacting online. Similarly, examining activities according to the *skills* activated in them (e.g., social, intellectual, creative, etc.) is also very relevant to E-leisure.

Recently, the opportunity of using physical skills in E-leisure has radically increased. In the first stages of E-leisure developments, most E-leisure has not involved any apparent physical exertion. Active leisure that involves physical activity has been found to be correlated with improved physical and mental health (Iso-Ahola, 1997). Hence, so far, most E-leisure activities had no physical health benefits. Moreover, it had negative indirect influence on

health by reducing participation in physically active and health-enhancing leisure activities (Mannell, Kaczynski & Aronson, 2005). However, it had some positive impact on mental health and well-being by providing social support and interaction, which are vital for coping with stress and negative life events (Bryce, 2001).

Some recent trends are changing the non-physical nature of E-leisure. The Internet offers a growing number of online gyms, in which, for a very low monthly fee, one can attend online classes (i.e., follow at home what the teacher demonstrates on the screen). In addition, a growing number of video games (such as Wii and X-box) involve physical activity. These games – sometimes called “exergames” or “exertainment” – involve the various forms of physical activity and exertion as the way to interact within the game (Lieberman, 2006). Such games were found to be successful in encouraging more physical activity among those reluctant to engage in the more traditional forms of exercise, particularly those with high levels of sedentary screen time (Whitehead, Johnston, Nixon & Welch, 2010). We believe that it is just a matter of time until they are available online. Moreover, medical research has demonstrated that patients with various health conditions tend to adhere and benefit more from online rather than offline self-monitoring and feedback tools related to their physical activities (van den Berg, Schoones & Vilet Vlieland, 2007). Therefore, even though most E-leisure is currently quite passive in terms of physical activity, it has a considerable potential to *enhance* physical activity among a large number of people.

Another activity-related dimension commonly examined in leisure research, is the issue of *constraints* to participation. This dimension is strongly associated with *freedom of choice*. While freedom of choice is inherent in leisure experience, it is also a dimension used in some classic socio-psychological models of leisure (e.g., Gunter & Gunter, 1980; Kelly, 1978). These models acknowledge that freedom of choice may be constrained by many factors, such as the availability of activities, participant skills, income or time; thus suggesting a scale ranging from low to high level of choice.

Concerning E-leisure, it seems that there are infinite possibilities both between and within activities. Yet, just as in offline leisure, participation may be constrained. Some of the factors constraining E-leisure (e.g., time) are similar to offline constraints, which are widely discussed in the leisure studies literature (for a review see Jackson, 2005). Others are exclusive to E-leisure. The latter are often described in the literature about the Digital Divide, which is a major concern for many new media researchers (c.f., Compaine, 2001). Such constraints include not only factors precluding Internet use (e.g., not knowing how to use it), but also difficulties faced by Internet users (e.g., difficulties in locating desired websites).

Furthermore, offline leisure constraints are often divided into *intervening* and *antecedent* constraints (Jackson, 2005). Intervening constraints may be interpersonal or structural factors affecting participation and the ability to benefit from it. They intervene between leisure preferences and participation. Antecedent constraints are intrapersonal factors affecting the preferences and interests of an individual. Like constraints to offline leisure, factors associated with the Digital Divide could also be intervening (e.g., limited bandwidth capacity) or antecedent constraints (e.g., fear of technology).

An important, related issue is the distinction between “high culture” and “popular culture”. This distinction has been controversial for a long time, and in the post-modern conception is not considered either legitimate or practical. Nevertheless, research on the consumption of culture has shown that different cultural behaviors and leisure activities require different types of skills and socialization and that their consumption is dependent on cultural capital, which is not distributed according to egalitarian principles (Bourdieu 1984; Gans, 1974; Zolberg, 1990). This also holds true for the new media technologies.

The effective use of the new media requires a convergence of different types of literacy: traditional literacy, for which at least a rudimentary level of reading and writing is needed, and media literacy, which has evolved as a consequence of exposure to audio-visual media, and which is based on knowledge of and familiarity with the dominant conventions and genres of these media. New technologies have also made a basic knowledge of English a prerequisite, although this may become superfluous in the future. This new type of convergent literacy constitutes a *sine qua non* condition for the use of the latest digital technologies (Adoni & Nossek, 2001), and at least some of its components are the result of a long socialization process and the high level of cultural capital acquired in upper class status groups.

The use of Internet and other new technologies by acquiring this new type of literacy also has an aspect of “conspicuous leisure”, as it is used by the new social elites who have the necessary means and skills. Moreover, the concept of the Digital Divide suggests that this is a problem on both the micro level, of individuals, and the macro level, of social groups and even societies as a whole. These issues are very relevant to E-leisure. The Internet and mobile phones offer a vast, never-ending array of contents at different levels of complexity and sophistication targeting various status groups in society. It could be argued that the issues faced by the scholars of high and popular culture, such as constraints related to cultural capital and literacy, are now challenging researchers of the new online culture.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned similarities, E-leisure is fundamentally different from offline leisure in that it radically decreases the importance of *physical place and space*. The leisure studies literature highlights the weight of place and space in the leisure experience, and distinguishes, for example, between domestic and out-of-home activities and between indoor and outdoor activities (c.f., Carpenter & Priest, 1989). Such distinctions are much less relevant to E-leisure, because in a movable world, a person may take part in online activities almost anywhere, be it at home, a coffee shop or a local park, but the external environment has very little impact on the experience (Hampton, Livio & Sessions, 2009). While a person's body is located in an atom-based real space, their awareness is immersed in a bit-based virtual space where the movement of bits is far less constrained than the more cumbersome transportation of atoms over distances (Negroponte, 1995).

Although the fundamental notions of place and space are connected to physical location, constructs of place and space are being reshaped as individuals spend more time online. Many physical metaphors have permeated the discussion of the Internet as well as impacting the way in which the Internet has penetrated popular culture (Mitra & Schwartz, 2001). We "surf" (i.e., move) the web, "visit" web "sites", and use "navigators" and "maps". We may even be "stuck" or "lost". Moreover, traditional notions of leisure spaces and activities (e.g., shopping, sports) are reproduced in virtual leisure spaces (Bryce, 2001). To an extent, the virtual world is *perceived* as a space, and we use images of the real world to describe and act in it. Unlike the physical world, this space has no limits, and moving in it takes seconds or less. Therefore, it challenges existing social structures, such as geographic borders or the dominance of urban centers (Castells, 2002).

Another outcome of the decreased importance of physical place and space is that the distinction between *formal* and *informal* leisure loses its relevance in e-leisure. Formal leisure is usually offered by an organization, either public or business, and it has a clear framework of time, place and participants. When attending a cinema, for example, the time and place of the activity are established, and the number of people in the audience is limited. Informal leisure is more flexible, and involves a mix of socially based (family and friends) and activity based (sports and reading) leisure participation (c.f., Janke, Payne & van Puymbroeck, 2008). Because E-leisure activities have no physical place and space, and are often asynchronous and have few limits on the number of participants, it is hard to identify online activities that meet the criteria of formal leisure. Yet, some E-leisure opportunities, such as online live music concerts or even gambling websites, do resemble formal leisure. Although they are virtual in nature, these activities replicate an experience which is somewhat similar to offline formal activities.

The Experience Aspect of Leisure and Related Dimensions

Defining leisure as an *experience* is an attempt to capture the subjective and deeper meanings of leisure. The focus is not on the time or the activity, but on the participant's experience; yet it is often difficult to separate the experience from its form (i.e., the activity), or from other mental states not attributable to the activity. An example of this challenge may be found when examining the experience of "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), which is a prominent concept in leisure research. Flow is the experience of intense absorption in challenging activities. The challenge inherent in the activity is complex enough to promote progressive mastery, and because attention is focused voluntarily and agreeably, it is experienced as intrinsically motivated. Flow is commonly associated with leisure, and it has been embraced by leisure scholars, sometimes even as leisure in its "true" sense (Tinsley & Tinsley, 1986). Yet the great majority of flow experiences are reported during work, not when in leisure (Csikszentmihalyi & LeFevre, 1989).

Leisure experience also correlates with time. In fact, it is a multi-phase experience that has pre and post involvement components such as anticipating and savoring (Kleiber, Walker & Mannell, 2011). In addition, the properties of leisure experiences are many, and hence, capturing essential qualities of leisure experience is a challenge. This is true when examining offline activities as well as when trying to examine E-leisure activities, which include only activities that are mediated by the new media – computers, Internet and cellular phones. Nevertheless, probing the experience connected with media consumption may facilitate the understanding of E-leisure experiences. Specifically, the uses and gratifications approach to the study of media bears upon the aesthetic and escapist experiences derived from the exposure to media in leisure time (Katz, Gurevitch & Haas, 1973). One of the main conclusions of these studies was that many popular media contents provide their audiences with a vicarious experience, that is, what is experienced through the reading about, hearing about or watching someone else doing something. A similar conclusion had emerged from contemporary studies investigating the enormous success of Reality programs, such as sports, food and cooking programs, Survival, American Idol and others.

A dominant dimension related to the experience aspect of leisure, which is valid for E-leisure just as it is for offline leisure experiences, is the *level of investment*. To describe the level of investment, the leisure studies literature often distinguishes between *serious leisure* and *casual leisure* (for a review, see Stebbins, 2007). Serious leisure is characterized by considerable commitment, effort and perseverance, and associated with many enduring psychological rewards. Whereas the term casual leisure serves mainly to clarify the meaning of serious leisure, it is in itself an important form of lei-

sure, and it is experienced far more often than serious leisure (Hutchinson & Kleiber, 2005). Determining whether an activity is serious or casual does not depend on the type of activity, or whether it is an offline or an online activity, but rather on the level of commitment and effort invested in that activity.

While participants in high investment activities are often greatly motivated, *leisure motivation* is a distinct and complex construct in leisure research. Motivation theory and research try to identify “the various needs that compel people to seek out specific leisure activities and experiences” (Kleiber, Walker & Mannell, 2011, p. 156). There are many approaches for studying leisure motivations. For example, one common approach distinguishes between *extrinsic motivation*, which is shaped by external circumstances, rewards and punishment; and *intrinsic motivation*, which seems deeper and is expressed in sustained involvement for no apparent external reward (c.f., Vallerand & Ratelle, 2004). Another popular approach differentiates between what *pushes* people to engage in certain activities, and which characteristics of leisure activities *pull* people to select certain activities rather than others (c.f., Yuan & McDonald, 1990).

Investigating leisure motivation is a difficult task, which often reveals only a small part of the motivational factors shaping leisure behaviours and preferences (Kleiber, Walker & Mannell, 2011). Yet, it is quite plausible to argue that the same factors influencing offline leisure affect participation in E-leisure. Participating in an online discussion group, for example, may be motivated by interest in the topic (intrinsic) or by the need for peer appreciation (extrinsic). While both are ‘push’ factors, there may also be something in the specific group (e.g., humour or warm and supportive atmosphere) that pulls one to participate.

The last experience-related dimension is the *benefits of leisure*. In fact, this dimension reflects the essence of leisure experiences. This dimension is strongly associated with the motivations aspects. The latter represents the benefits sought, whereas the former stands for what is eventually realized as a result of participation. The variety of leisure benefits is exceptionally large, and includes, among others, psychological benefits (e.g., self-confidence), physiological benefits (e.g., increased bone mass), psycho-physiological benefits (e.g., reduced stress), social benefits (e.g., strengthened communities), economic benefits (e.g., employment opportunities), environmental benefits (e.g., protection and preservation of natural environments), and more (for a review, see Brown, Driver & Peterson, 1991). All these benefits are relevant for E-leisure as well (Bryce, 2001). For example, online communities may provide emotional support; social networks such as Facebook may strengthen social ties; and online games may reduce stress and alleviate mood. Even environmental benefits are relevant, as spending more time

online limits transportation use (i.e., decreases air pollution) and misuse of nature. Similarly, E-leisure, just as offline leisure activities, may include risks and unpleasant experiences such as boredom, tension and disappointment.

To sum up, in this part of our paper we argued that the three core aspects of leisure – time, action and experience – as well as many of their related dimensions, are common to both traditional and E-leisure. However, there are many dimensions, the importance of which has decreased or underwent a process of transformation in E-leisure. Now, we proceed to discuss dimensions related to the core aspects which were practically irrelevant in the classic offline leisure, and have actually “emerged” only in the online leisure.

Dimensions Related to the Core Aspects of Leisure that have emerged with E-leisure

E-leisure has introduced new, unique dimensions related to the core aspects, which were not commonly applied in traditional leisure research. Although some of these dimensions may have some relevance to offline leisure as well, they are mainly significant for describing, analyzing and categorizing E-leisure activities. In this section we describe each one of these dimensions, and present some arguments about possible associations between them and the core aspects of time, action and experience common to both types of leisure.

Synchronicity – A Dimension Related to the Time Aspect

One of the prominent dimensions of E-leisure is the existence of a multiplicity of asynchronous social activities and interactions, which hardly has an equivalent in offline leisure. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary (2010), synchronicity is the quality or fact of being synchronous, namely, happening, existing, or arising at precisely the same time. When we consider traditional leisure activities, it seems that most of them have that quality. This is particularly true for non-solitary activities. All the participants in a given activity, whether it is a concert, a football game, or dinner at a restaurant, take part in it at the same time. In most cases, they are also present at a certain place, but this is not a condition for synchronicity. A telephone conversation, for example, is synchronous even though the participants may be miles away from each other.

In E-leisure, the experience of time and interaction is altered in fundamental ways. Interactions can be both synchronous and asynchronous (Smith & Kollock, 1999). Chat rooms and Instant Messaging Software (IMS) such as Skype and Messenger, for example, enable synchronous interpersonal communication. However, communication in forums/message boards and

social network websites is asynchronous. Discussion participants post their comments when they visit the website, and this may happen hours or even days after the last comment had been posted. Thus, browsing some websites' archives reveals discussions that last for weeks or even months.

Synchronicity is not necessarily a matter of technology, but of the ways in which people use the technology. A chat may be asynchronous if the speed of posting is slow. Similarly, online games, which are usually considered synchronous, may become asynchronous when there are no speed requirements or limited response times. A child and his grandfather may play one online chess game for several days. Whenever they have an opportunity, they check whether something has changed on the virtual board, and if so, they make their next move. Hence, E-leisure activities should not be classified as synchronous or asynchronous. Synchronicity should be examined on a continuum that ranges from a low to a higher level.

Another issue to consider is that individuals may be involved in synchronous and asynchronous online interactions simultaneously, while being present in the external environment (Bryce, 2001). A student may be chatting on a social network site, playing World of Warcraft on another site, and watching his favorite reality show on television at the same time. Some studies show that such an attention split is very common, especially among adolescents (Gross, Juvonen & Gable, 2002), and that it may lead to "time deepening" that may have some advantages in terms of accomplishment (Robinson & Godbey, 1997, p. 38). However, the quality of such simultaneous experiences is questionable.

Is a three-day chess game similar to a one-hour intense interaction between a child and his grandfather? Is a month-long discussion of the government's economic policy similar to a three-hour passionate squabble about the same topic? Is simultaneous participation in a couple of activities more enjoyable than focusing on one? The answer to these questions is "Probably not". The opportunity for asynchronous participation may increase the sense of control over the time and pace of the experience, but it decreases the level of involvement. Asynchronous participation may provide moments of leisure (see our previous discussion on *distinctiveness*), but not the complete experience afforded by synchronicity.

Interactivity – A Dimension Related to the Action Aspect

The convergence of telecommunications, data communications, and mass communications into a single medium has enabled mediated interactive communication. This advancement is considered one of the most important structural changes produced by the communications revolution (van Dijk,

1999). Yet, while the term *interactivity* is frequently used, the study of interactivity is for the most part pre-theoretical and descriptive. Bucy (2004a) argued that “after nearly three decades of study and analysis, we scarcely know what interactivity *is*, let alone what it *does*, and have scant insight into the conditions in which interactive processes are likely to be consequential for members of a social system” (p. 373). In an attempt to conceptualize this elusive concept, he defined interactivity as “reciprocal communication exchanges that involve some form of *media* or information and communication technology” (p. 375). Hence, although every form of social leisure may be considered interactive, interactivity is exclusive to E-leisure.

Interactivity may be categorized into two general types: *user-to-system* interaction and *user-to-user* interaction. The first type involves interaction with online contents, when the users can select the content and control its presentation and other aspects of the interface (Massey & Levy, 1999). The second type involves interpersonal conversations mediated by the technology (McMillan, 2002). Scholars seem to agree that both types may vary in their level of interactivity. Factors determining the level of interactivity are the range of user choices, the speed of interaction or response time, and the significance of interface actions (Laurel, 1986; Steuer, 1995). Another factor is the user’s sense of interactivity, a subjective factor associated with the level of control experienced (Laurel, 1991; Williams, Rice & Rogers, 1988).

All of these factors are intrinsically correlated with the aforementioned *action aspect* of leisure. Specifically, they are associated with the freedom of choice, the sense of control that results from such freedom, and the significance attributed to an activity (i.e., the level of involvement). Consequently, we argue that the more interactivity users experience, the more their use of the Internet is experienced as leisure.

This claim may be easily tested while browsing the web. Think, for example, about websites of makeup brands. Sites with a low level of interactivity simply present their products by category (lips, eyes, skin, etc.), demonstrating the final outcome of the products’ usage through photos of beautiful models. Sites with a high level of interactivity enable visitors to upload their own picture, and virtually “test” the products. In that case, they can try different combinations of makeup, powder blush, lip gloss, eye shadow, mascara and so forth. The number of combinations depends on the variety of products, and the whole process becomes play-like, engaging and enjoyable. Hence, the more interactive the site, the more it provides an experience of leisure. It should be noted, however, that this principle may be applied to non-leisure online activities as well. In fact, even work-related activities, as well as any online social interaction, may become more enjoyable and play-like when the system is more interactive and/or when the other

users are more cooperative and responsive. This does not mean that these activities are necessarily perceived or experienced as leisure, but they may have a clear leisure component.

Our argument is strengthened when examining the benefits of interactivity. In his widely cited article, Rafaeli (1988) catalogued the benefits of interactivity, including increased acceptance, satisfaction, learning, and mastery; enhanced thoughtfulness, cooperation, and responsibility; and heightened performance, motivation, and sociability. Examining these benefits through the lenses of the leisure benefits literature (e.g., Brown, et al., 1991) leads to the conclusion that interactivity provides many psychological and social benefits often experienced in leisure.

Moreover, some scholars (e.g., Bucy, 2004b; Liu & Shrum, 2002) have discussed the undesirable consequences of interactive processes, such as confusion, frustration and disorientation among those who have poor or little multimedia literacy or information-processing abilities. It seems that in order to benefit from interactivity, users' skills must be matched to the challenges posed by the interactive process. This requirement is identical to one of the main conditions for "flow", that optimal experience mentioned above (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Hence, with adequate skills, interactivity may support the experience of flow.

Anonymity – A Dimension Related to the Action Aspect

Another unique dimension of E-leisure is the opportunity for full anonymity that it offers. Although one can be anonymous when participating in traditional offline leisure activities as well, in most cases this anonymity is only partial. When attending a huge rock concert or traveling alone in a foreign country, one remains largely, but not entirely, anonymous. People are capable of making assumptions about a person's gender, age, ethnicity, and even sexual orientation, just by looking at that person. Only in cyberspace can users choose to neutralize all their offline personal characteristics. They may choose to impersonate a completely different person, in terms of their age, gender, race and social status. They may even choose to remain absolutely invisible and be "lurkers", who do not interact with others and simply follow online interactions (Preece, Nonnecke & Andrews, 2004). Hence, total anonymity is possible only in cyberspaces.

Just like synchronicity and interactivity, anonymity is not a binary concept. The extreme ends of the continuum are 'lurking' and 'full exposure' (as may be found in social networks). A mid-level would be the case of users who choose to expose certain personal details but conceal others, as often practised in online games and virtual communities. Many game players and

community members use personalised avatars (e.g., “Butterfly, 32, Female” or “Jim22, retired and happy”), and provide, in their communication with others, private details such as place of residence and occupation. However, there is no way to detect whether that information is true or not. Therefore, the midway level has a range of variations, from exposing many true details, which is closer to the ‘full exposure’ end, to hiding most offline characteristics, which is closer to the ‘lurking’ end.

The anonymity creates a unique opportunity for individuals to express existing and hidden parts of their identity, and to be valued for their performance and communications regardless of social markers such as class and race (Smith & Kollock, 1999). Such experience can be empowering and may enable self-expression, self-discovery and growth. Moreover, anonymity enables discussing sensitive issues, which are not discussed elsewhere. This may explain the proliferation of support groups and websites providing information about illness and health promotion. The information and support provided on these sites have both physical and mental health benefits (c.f., Rains & Young, 2009).

At the same time, however, anonymity has a dark and undesirable side, as it “provides an opportunity for the exchange of deviant and illegal information and images” (Bryce, 2001. p. 11). According to the theory of deviant leisure (Rojek, 2000), such information exchange may contribute to society as it may lead to a re-evaluation of cultural values and social change. But it may also legitimize and even encourage abusive, hostile and hateful messaging, and illegal acts (such as vandalism) or dangerous behaviours (such as suicides) in real life.

The same anonymity that helps people with stigmatized illnesses share their difficulties and receive support may put naïve juveniles at risk of emotional and physical abuse. This suggests that the utopian philosophy of open access and free communication, and the enthusiastic arguments about online empowerment and growth, must be moderated by recognizing the potentially deviant usages of the Internet (Bryce, 2001). When examining anonymous E-leisure activities, one must be aware that alongside their constructive potential, some of them may be in conflict with the social and moral values of users and society in general (Langford, 1998).

Participation/Immersion in Virtual Reality – A Dimension Related to the Experience Aspect

The last, but perhaps the most radical feature of E-leisure is the opportunity it offers for experiencing virtual reality. This bears of course on a basic philosophical issue, perhaps as old as humanity itself. Already in the 6th century

BC, the Greek philosopher Plato, in his famous “Allegory of the Cave”, wrote about prisoners held in a dark cave, who are convinced that the “reality” is the shadows of the real things projected on the wall of the cave, comparing those prisoners to many ordinary people who are enchained by their own ignorance and incapable of seeing reality beyond the illusion. Nowadays, in E-leisure, dominated by the latest versions of illusions and virtual reality offered by the new communication technologies, the experience of virtual reality through the media has become perhaps the most crucial issue in defining new leisure experience.

In his seminal book on virtual reality, Rheingold (1991) frames his discussion in a large perspective of experiencing reality, starting from the illusions created by religious rites, theatre and art, and ending with the entry into cyberspace. In order to enjoy any activity based on fiction, such as reading books or comics, watching theatre plays, movies, television or even playing video games, listeners/readers/spectators must undergo a psychological process of suspension of disbelief. In other words, they must overlook the limitations of the medium (story teller, book or television) and enter a mood in which fictional premises become a temporary reality for them (Laurel, 1991). This mental state of suspension of disbelief is voluntary, and absolutely necessary for any aesthetic experience, catharsis and even light entertainment. However, in an era of media ubiquity and increased use, even to the extent of dependence on them, this can lead to a completely different situation, of blurring the boundaries between everyday, common sense reality and the virtual reality.

Rheingold (1991) suggested that the unique elements of the virtual reality experience are moving, navigating or surfing in the space, and creating for the users a sensation of being present or existing in a place that is different from the place in which they “really” exist in their physical body at the same time. Cline (2005) argued that virtual reality can be integrated into daily life and activity, and pointed out that the current trend in virtual reality is to merge various user interfaces in order to create a fully integrated cyberspace experience. Similarly, E-leisure can be integrated into offline leisure, and there is even evidence of positive correlation between Internet use and membership in religious, recreation and community organizations that was found in research (e.g., Katz & Aspden, 1997).

We would like to take one step further and suggest that online leisure can interact with offline leisure in two different modes, each consisting of a continuum of experiences. The first mode is the *integration* of virtual reality with the everyday offline activities, including leisure activities and cultural behaviour. At one end of the continuum of this mode, individuals are relatively passive regarding the virtual reality, as they use online contents as a

means for planning and improving their offline leisure. An example of this may be organizing their travels through the Internet or buying tickets for live performances online. At the other end is the heavy use of virtual reality in a manner that changes the user's everyday life and leisure. An example may be using social networks and interacting with as many "friends" as possible, who are identified as actual persons and can be met and recognized in offline leisure activities. Another example is becoming a member of online communities which share the same leisure interests and then meeting them in offline leisure. This mode of interaction is characterized by a high level of integration between E-leisure and offline leisure, social and cultural behaviour.

The second mode of possible interaction with the virtual reality is the adoption of the virtual reality as a fully-fledged alternate reality, and *immersion* into it. In this case, the weaker end of the continuum may consist of watching a video on YouTube or reading others' posts in online communities without taking an active part in the discussion ('lurking'). A higher level of immersion may occur when a person moves (surf, navigate), creates contents (e.g., texts or art), connects and interacts with anonymous people in the virtual space. The ultimate peak of this experience is the full immersion of the individual user into the virtual reality, either by means of avatars, or the individual's own projected personality (Boellstorff, 2008; Grau, 2003; Meadows, 2008). Such immersion may occur while playing online 3-D digital games, currently with visual and sound, and in the future probably with touch, taste and smell as well.

Similar to synchronicity and interactivity, we suggest that there is an association between these two modes and the quality of E-leisure activities. In order to be in the high ends of the continuums, a greater level of suspension of disbelief is required. However, when the level of integration between E-leisure and offline leisure is high, or when users undergo full immersion into virtual reality, the experience is also more powerful.

Summary: The Mediatization of Leisure

Leisure has been transformed by the process of mediatization (Krotz, 2008, 2009). Yet, E-leisure does not replace offline leisure. These two types of leisure coexist and are often integrated, and both may contribute to individuals' well-being (Leung & Lee, 2005). In addition, E-leisure does not necessarily represent a *new game*. We can find some of its unique qualities in offline activities as well. For example, writing love letters is an asynchronous social activity, and it may be considered interactive as this activity is mediated by paper, pen and postage. Attending a mask parade can enable full anonymity, and children's play easily offers them virtual realities. To an extent, the

Internet is just a development of the public park, as it is a social space where people chat and play (Arora, 2011). Nevertheless, it opens new possibilities for exercising leisure. Moreover, even though many online activities have an equivalent offline version, they offer rather different experiences. For example, instant messaging between lovers is significantly different than love letters correspondence. Hence, there is a very strong case for E-leisure being a *game changer*.

The discussion of E-leisure and the comparison between E-leisure and traditional offline leisure presented in this article are inevitably limited. While using many concepts from the leisure, culture and media fields, we could not detail or relate to all the extensive literature that is relevant for this discussion. Still, it is precisely the more general approach which made this discussion possible and, hopefully, valuable.

If we summarize all that has been discussed so far, this article argues that E-leisure should definitely be conceptualized as leisure. Although E-leisure challenges conventional conceptions of leisure (Aitchison, 1999), all three traditional core aspects of leisure, namely, time, action and experience, are as relevant to E-leisure. E-leisure can be examined in terms of time, and it certainly offers a wide range of activities and experiences.

With regard to the dimensions related to the three core aspects, we argue that while some of them, which are used in order to describe and analyze traditional offline leisure, are equally relevant for studying E-leisure, others decrease in their significance. Specifically, we claim that E-leisure has significantly decreased the *distinctiveness* of leisure as time, and that it has radically decreased the importance of *physical place and space* and the relevance of the distinction between *formal* and *informal* leisure. Moreover, we suggest four new dimensions particularly related to studying E-leisure, namely, synchronicity, interactivity, anonymity and participation in virtual reality. These dimensions are mainly significant for describing, analyzing and categorizing E-leisure activities, as well as the modes of possible interaction between the two types of leisure. Our discussion throughout this article not only maps the relevance of each dimension to both E-leisure and offline leisure, but also links these dimensions to the core aspects of leisure, suggesting the categories and scales to be used when studying them. Table 1 provides a summary of that discussion, and presents the core aspects of leisure, all dimensions related to those aspects (including the new ones), the categories and scales to be used when studying those dimension, as well as a notion regarding the relevance of each dimension for E-leisure compared to offline leisure.

TABLE 1
Summary of Aspects and Related Dimensions

Core Aspect	Related Dimensions	Options	Relevance for E-leisure (EL) compared with Offline Leisure (OL)
Time	<i>Frequency</i>	A scale ranging from low to high frequency	EL = OL
	<i>Duration</i>	Minutes, hours, days, etc.	EL = OL
	<i>Distinctiveness</i>	A scale ranging from low to high level of distinctiveness	EL < OL
	<i>Synchronicity</i>	A scale ranging from low to high level of synchronicity	EL > OL
Activity	<i>Social dimension</i>	Solitary and Social (intimate, group and mass leisure)	EL = OL
	<i>Skills activated</i>	Social, Intellectual, Creative, Physical, etc.	EL = OL
	<i>Constraints</i>	Intervening vs. antecedent	EL = OL
	<i>Freedom of choice</i>	A scale ranging from low to high level of choice	EL = OL
	<i>Social capital required</i>	Highbrow vs. lowbrow activities	EL = OL
	<i>Place and space</i>	Domestic & Out of home; Indoor & Outdoor leisure	EL < OL
	<i>Formality</i>	Formal vs. Informal leisure	EL < OL
	<i>Interactivity</i>	A scale ranging from low to high level of interactivity	EL > OL
	<i>Anonymity</i>	A scale ranging from 'lurking' to 'full exposure'	EL > OL
Experience	<i>Level of Investment</i>	Casual vs. Serious leisure	EL = OL
	<i>Motivation</i>	Various (e.g., Intrinsic & Extrinsic, Push & Pull)	EL = OL
	<i>Benefits (gratifications)</i>	Psychological, Social, Physical, Economic, etc.	EL = OL
	<i>Experiencing Virtual Reality</i>	Scales examining the level of <i>immersion</i> in virtual reality and the level of <i>integration</i> between EL and OL	EL > OL

New media scholars, who study the new dimensions we have discussed, must not neglect the core aspects of traditional leisure and the dimensions common to both online and offline leisure. Similarly, while leisure scholars are profoundly familiarized with the dimensions used for studying offline leisure, they should also be aware of the complexity of these relatively new dimensions. As discussed, these new dimensions may have a strong impact on time management, participation in activities and experiences of both online and offline leisure.

The ubiquity and power of new media in the domain of leisure and cultural behaviour justify, in our opinion, the notion that leisure and culture have undergone a process of mediatization, an institutionalized “ordering principle that allows us to relate events and developments unfolding in different places and historical times” (Krotz, 2009, p. 24). It is a social process during which various social institutions increase their interaction with communication media and even become dependent on them and shaped by them. Furthermore, it is a meta-process and should be investigated along with other relevant meta-processes such as globalization, commercialization, and individualization, all of which impact both offline and online leisure (Krotz, 2008, 2009).

This article, then, provides more questions than answers. Further research should examine the influences of the loss of relevance to E-leisure of some traditional dimensions, including the decreased distinctiveness of leisure as time, the decreased importance of physical place and space, and the decreased opportunities for formal leisure. Studies should explore how these changes affect individuals’ preferences, choices, behaviors and experiences, both offline and online. In addition, they should examine the effect of these changes on communities and societies at large.

Future studies should also examine the effects of the emergence of relatively new dimensions on leisure participation, experience and benefits. This article suggested that the opportunity for asynchronous participation offered by E-leisure activities decreases the level of activity involvement and the quality of the experience that asynchronous activities provide. This suggestion needs to be tested, as well as our suggestion that interactivity does exactly the opposite. In addition, it should be worthwhile to investigate these dimensions in E-leisure activities compared to online work-related activities, and explore their role in blurring the boundaries between work and leisure. Such investigation may produce better understanding of the human existence in a reality of a wired world (Lightman, 2005).

Additional research may explore the benefits and risks associated with anonymous E-leisure activities, and compare activities with a different level of anonymity on the scale that ranges from ‘lurking’ to ‘full exposure’. There

is a lot to be learned about the decision making processes with regard to the level of self-exposure users' choice to exhibit in various online activities and contexts. There is also much to be learned about the unique experiences associated with each level of exposure. Lastly, the various levels of integration between E-leisure and offline leisure and the levels of immersion into virtual reality should be studied as well. Further research may examine the factors influencing each mode, and investigate whether indeed, as suggested in this article, these two modes affect the quality of E-leisure activities.

All these issues should be studied both on the micro and the macro level. Researchers should examine specific activities while taking into account all relevant aspects, and they should also examine E-leisure as a whole, as well as its effects on offline leisure and vice versa, and its contributions and risks to individuals and communities. E-leisure is a significant social phenomenon, and it is here to stay. Therefore, the mediatization of leisure and cultural participation must also be studied in relation to other social meta-processes characterizing the 21st century and beyond.

REFERENCES

- ADONI, H., & NOSSEK, H. (2001). The new media consumers: Media convergence and the displacement effect. *Communications: The European Journal for Media Research*, 26(1), 59-83.
- AITCHISON, C. (1999). New cultural geographies: The spatiality of leisure, gender and sexuality. *Leisure Studies*, 18(1), 19-39.
- ARORA, P. (2011). Online social sites as virtual parks: An investigation into leisure online and offline. *The Information Society*, 27, 113-120.
- BAUDRILLARD, J. (1983). *Simulations*. New York: Semiotext(e).
- BAUWENS, M. (1994). What is Cyberspace? *Computers in Libraries*, 14(4), 42-48.
- BERGER, P.L., & LUCKMAN, T. (1967). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. London: Penguin.
- BLONDHEIM, M. (2003). Harold Adams Innis and his bias of communication. In E. Katz, J. D. Peters, T. Liebes, and A. Orloff, *Canonic texts in communication research* (pp. 156-190). London: Polity Press.
- BOELLSTORFF, T. (2008). *Coming of age in second life*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- BOURDIEU, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgment of taste*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- BROWN, J.B., DRIVER, B.L., & PETERSON, G.L. (1991). *Benefits of leisure*. State college, PA: Venture publishing.
- BRYCE, J. (2001). The technological transformation of leisure. *Social Science Computer Review*, 19(1), 7-16.
- BUCY, E.P. (2004a). Interactivity in society: Locating an elusive concept. *The Information Society*, 20, 373-383.

- BUCY, E.P. (2004b). The interactivity paradox: Closer to the news but confused. In E. P. Bucy and J. E. Newhagen (Eds.), *Media access: Social and psychological dimensions of new technology use* (pp. 47-72). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- CARPENTER, G., & PRIEST, S. (1989). The adventure experience paradigm and non-outdoor leisure pursuits. *Leisure Studies*, 8(1), 65-75.
- CASTELLS, M. (2002). The geography of the Internet: Networked places. In *The Internet galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, business and society* (pp. 207-246). Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- CHANG, J.H., & ZHANG, H. (2008). Analyzing online game players: From materialism and motivation to attitude. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 11, 711-714.
- CHENG, S-L. (2006). *Relationship between demographics, Internet experience, leisure-time Internet usage, and social capital*. A thesis submitted to the University of North Carolina. Retrieved July 11, 2010 from: <<http://gradworks.umi.com/14/35/1435057.html>>
- CLINE, M.S. (2005). *Power, madness & immortality: The future of virtual reality*. Oakland, CA: New village press.
- COMPAINE, B.M. (2001). *The digital divide: Facing a crisis or creating a myth?* Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- CSIKSZENTMIHALYI, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. New York: Harper Perennial.
- CSIKSZENTMIHALYI, M., & LEFEVRE, J. (1989). Optimal experience in work and leisure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 56(5), 815-822.
- EISENSTEIN, E.L. (1979). *The printing press as an agent of change: Communication and cultural transformations in early modern Europe*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- FARMER, F.R. (1989). Cyberspace: Getting there and away. *Journal of Computer Game Design*. Retrieved September 19, 2010 from: <<http://www.ibiblio.org/pub/academic/communications/papers/habitat/getthere.txt>>
- GANS, H.J. (1974). *Popular culture and high culture*. New York: Basic Books.
- GOODY, J. (Ed.) (1968). *Literacy in traditional societies*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- GOODY, J., & WATT, L.P. (1963). The consequences of literacy. *Comparative Studies in History and Society*, 5, 304-345.
- GRAU, O. (2003). *Virtual art from illusion to immersion*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- GROSS, E.F., JUVONEN, J., & GABLE, S.L. (2002). Internet use and well-being in adolescence. *Journal of Social Issues*, 58(1), 75-90.
- GUNTER, B., & GUNTER, N. (1980). Leisure styles: A conceptual framework for modern leisure. *Sociological Quarterly*, 21, 361-374.
- HAMPTON, K.N., LIVIO, O., & SESSIONS, L. (May 2009). *The social life of wireless urban spaces: Internet use, social networks, and the public realm*. A Paper presented at the Mobile 2.0: Beyond Voice? Pre-conference workshop at the International Communication Association (ICA) Conference, Chicago, Illinois, May 21-25, 2009. Retrieved July, 26, 2010 from: <http://www.lirneasia.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/final-paper_hampton_et_al.pdf>

- HENRICKSON, L. (April 2000). *Having a sense of ourselves: Communications technology and personal identity*. A paper presented at the "Starting from Society" symposium at ASIB'2000 convention, Birmingham University, UK, April 16-19, 2000. Retrieved July, 26, 2010 from: <<http://cfpm.org/papers/henrickson.pdf>>
- HUTCHINSON, S.L., & KLEIBER, D.A. (2005). Gifts of the ordinary: Casual leisure's contribution to health and well being. *World Leisure Journal*, 47(3), 2-16.
- INNIS, H. (1951). *The bias of communication*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- ISO-AHOLA, S.E. (1997). A psychological analysis of leisure and health. In J.T. Haworth (Ed.), *Work, leisure and well-being* (pp. 117-130). New York: Routledge.
- JACKSON, E.L. (2005). *Constraints to leisure*. State College, PA: Venture Publishing.
- JANKE, M.C., PAYNE, L.L., & VAN PUymbROECK, M. (2008). The role of informal and formal leisure activities in the disablement process. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 67(3), 231-257.
- KATZ, E., GUREVITCH, M., & HAAS, H. (1973). On the use of mass media for important things. *American Sociological Review*, 36, 164-181.
- KATZ, E., HASS, H., WEITZ, S., ADONI, H., GUREVITCH, M., SCHIFF, M., & GOLDBERG-ANABI, D. (2000). *Tarbut hapnai belsrael: Tmurot bedfusei hapeilit hatarbutit 1970-1990* [Leisure patterns in Israel: Changes in cultural activity 1970-1990]. Tel Aviv, Israel: The Open University.
- KATZ, J., & ASPDEN, P. (1997). A nation of strangers. *Communication of the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM)*, 40(12), 81-86.
- KELLY, J.R. (1978). Situational and social factors in leisure decisions. *The Pacific Sociological Review*, 21(3), 313-330
- KELLY, J.R. (1996). *Leisure*. 3rd Edition. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- KLEIBER, D. (1999). *Leisure experience and human development*. New York: Basic Books.
- KLEIBER, D.A., WALKER, G.J. & MANNELL, R.C. (2011). *A social psychology of leisure*, 2nd edition State College, PA: Venture Press.
- KROTZ, F. (2008). Media Connectivity: Concepts, Conditions, and Consequences. In A. Hepp, F. Krotz, and S. Moores (Eds.), *Network, connectivity and flow: Key concepts for media and cultural studies* (pp. 13-31). New York: Hampton Press.
- KROTZ, F. (2009). Mediatization: A concept with which to grasp media and societal change. In K. Lundby (Ed.), *Mediatization: Concept, changes, consequences* (pp. 21-40). New York: Peter Lang.
- LANGFORD, D. (1998). Ethics @ the Internet: Bilateral procedures in electronic communication. In B.D. Loader (Ed.), *Cyberspace divide: Equality, agency and policy in the information age* (pp. 98-112). London: Routledge.
- LAUREL, B. (1986). Interface as mimesis. In D.A. Norman and S. Draper (Eds.), *User centered system design: New perspectives on human-computer interaction* (pp. 67-85). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- LAUREL, B. (1991). *Computers as theatre*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- LAWSON, H.M., & LECK, K. (2006). Dynamics of Internet dating. *Social Science Computer Review*, 24, 189-208.

- LEUNG, L., & LEE, P.S.N. (2005). Multiple determinants of life quality: The roles of Internet activities, use of new media, social support, and leisure activities. *Telematics and Informatics*, 3, 161-180.
- LIEBERMAN, D.E. (April, 2006). *Dance games and other exergames: What the research says*. Retrieved September 12, 2011, from: <<http://www.comm.ucsb.edu/faculty/lieberman/exergames.htm>>
- LIGHTMAN, A. (2005). Prisoner in a wired world. In *A Sense of the mysterious: Science and the human spirit* (pp. 183-208). New York: Random House.
- LITWIN H. (2001). Activity, social network and well-being in old age: an empirical examination. *The Canadian Journal on Aging/La Revue Canadienne du Vieillessement*, 19(3), 343-362.
- LIU, Y., & SHRUM, L.J. (2002). What is interactivity and is it always such a good thing? Implications of definition, person, and situation for the influence of interactivity on advertising effectiveness. *Journal of Advertising*, 31(4), 53-64.
- MANNELL, R.C., KACZYNSKI, A.T., & ARONSON, R.M. (2005). Adolescent participation and flow experience in physically active leisure and electronic media activities: Testing the displacement hypothesis. *Loisir et Société/Society and Leisure*, 28, 653-675.
- MASSEY, B.L., & LEVY, M.R. (1999). Interactivity, online journalism, and English-language Web newspapers in Asia. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 76(1), 138-151.
- MCLUHAN, M. (1964). *Understanding media*. London: Sphere Books.
- MCMILLAN, S.J. (2002). Exploring models of interactivity from multiple research traditions: Users, documents, and systems. In L. Lievrouw and S. Livingston (Eds.), *Handbook of new media* (pp. 163-182). London: Sage.
- MEADOWS, M.S. (2008). *I, AVATAR: The culture and consequences of having a Second Life*. Berkeley, CA: New Riders.
- MERRIAM-WEBSTER DICTIONARY (2010). *Synchronicity*. Retrieved September 15, 2010, from: <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/synchronicity>>
- MEYROWITZ, J. (1985). *No sense of place*. New York: Oxford University.
- MIAH, A. (2000). Virtually nothing: Re-evaluating the significance of cyberspace. *Leisure Studies*, 19, 211-225.
- MITRA, A., & SCHWARTZ, R.L. (2001). From cyber space to cybernetic space: Rethinking the relationship between real and virtual spaces. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 7(1). Retrieved September 20, 2010, from: <<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol7/issue1/mitra.html>>
- NEGROPONTE, N. (1995). *Being digital*. New York: Vintage Books.
- NIMROD, G. (2010). Seniors' online communities: A quantitative content analysis. *The Gerontologist*, 50(3), 382-392.
- PARKER, S. (1971). *The future of work and leisure*. New York: Praeger.
- PEW INTERNET and AMERICAN LIFE (2010). *Daily Internet activities, 2000-2009*. Retrieved September 15, 2010, from: <<http://www.pewInternet.org/Trend-Data/Daily-Internet-Activities-20002009.aspx>>
- POSTMAN, N. (1982). *The disappearance of childhood*. New York: Delacaorte Press.

- PREECE, J., NONNECKE, B., & ANDREWS, D. (2004). The top five reasons for lurking: Improving community experiences for everyone. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 20(2), 201-223.
- RAFAELI, S. (1988). Interactivity: From new media to communication. In R. Hawkins, J. Wiemann, and S. Pingree (Eds.), *Advancing communication science: Merging mass and interpersonal processes* (pp. 110-134). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- RAINS, S.A., & YOUNG, V. (2009). A meta-analysis of research on formal computer-mediated support groups: Examining group characteristics and health outcomes. *Human Communication Research*, 35, 309-336.
- RHEINGOLD, H. (1991). *Virtual reality: Identity and community in cyberspace*. New York: Summit books.
- ROBERTS, L., SMITH, L., & POLLOCK, C. (2002). MOOing till the cows come home: The search for sense of community in virtual environments. In A. T. Fisher, C.C. Sonn, and B.J. Bishop (Eds.), *Psychological sense of community: Research, applications, and implications* (pp. 223-245). New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum.
- ROBINSON, J.P., & GODBEY, G. (1997). *Time for life: The surprising way Americans use their time*. State College, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- ROJEK, C. (2000). *Leisure and culture*. London: Macmillan.
- SMITH, M.A., & KOLLOCK, P. (1999). *Communities in cyberspace*. London: Routledge.
- STEBBINS, R.A. (2007). *Serious leisure: A perspective for our time*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- STEUER, J. (1995). Defining virtual reality: Dimensions determining telepresence. In F. Biocca and M.R. Levy (Eds.), *Communication in the age of virtual reality* (pp. 33-56). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- TINSLEY, H.E.A., & TINSLEY, D.J. (1986). A theory of the attributes, benefits, and causes of leisure experience. *Leisure Sciences*, 8, 1-45.
- VALLERAND, R.J., & RATELLE, C.F. (2004). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation: A hierarchical model. In E. L. Deci and R. M. Ryan (Eds.), *Handbook of self-determination research* (pp. 37-64). Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press.
- VAN DEN BERG, M.H., SCHOONES, J.W., & VILET VLIELAND, T.P.M. (2007). Internet-based physical activity interventions: A systematic review of the literature. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 9(3), e26.
- VAN DIJK, J. (1999). *The network society: Social aspects of new media*. London: Sage.
- WATSON, R., & BLONDHEIM, M. (Eds.) (2007). *The Toronto school of communication theory*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.
- WHITEHEAD A., JOHNSTON, H., NIXON, N., & WELCH J. (2010). Exergame effectiveness: What the numbers can tell us. In *Proceedings of the Fifth ACM SIGGRAPH Symposium on Video Games* (pp. 55-62). New York, NY: ACM.
- WILLIAMS, F., RICE, R.E., & ROGERS, E.M. (1988). *Research methods and the new media*. New York: Free Press.
- YUAN, S., & McDONALD, C. (1990). Motivational determinants of international pleasure time. *Journal of Travel Research*, 29(1), 42-44.
- ZOLBERG, V. (1990). *Constructing a sociology of arts*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Galit NIMROD and Hanna ADONI
Conceptualizing E-leisure

ABSTRACT

The emergence and diffusion of new information and communication technologies have profoundly affected and are still transforming individuals' leisure. These technologies offer many enjoyable activities often described as "online leisure", "cyber leisure" or "E-leisure". Although numerous studies have examined such activities, only few scholars have related to the *essence* of E-leisure. Based on the principal components of leisure studies and new media research, this article aims to conceptualise E-leisure and to explore its distinctive qualities. It starts with discussing the relevance of the core definitional-aspects of traditional leisure (i.e., time, activity and experience) for conceptualizing E-leisure, and examines which dimensions related to these aspects are relevant to E-leisure and which have lost significance. The article also suggests four new dimensions required for fuller understanding of E-leisure, namely, synchronicity, interactivity, anonymity, and virtual reality, and presents some arguments about possible associations between these dimensions and the core aspects of leisure. Lastly, it discusses the "mediatization" of leisure and directions for future research.

Galit NIMROD et Hanna ADONI
La conceptualisation des « loisirs électroniques »

RÉSUMÉ

L'émergence et la diffusion de nouvelles informations et technologies de la communication, ont profondément affecté et continuent de transformer les loisirs des individus. Ces technologies offrent de nombreuses activités agréables souvent décrites comme des « loisirs en ligne », du « cyberloisir » ou des « loisirs électroniques ». Bien que de nombreuses études aient examiné ces activités, peu de chercheurs ont fait des liens avec l'essence même des « loisirs électroniques ». Basé sur les composants principaux des études de loisirs et sur la recherche sur les nouveaux médias, cet article vise à conceptualiser les « loisirs électroniques » et à explorer leurs qualités distinctives. D'abord, on discute de la pertinence des aspects qui définissent la base des loisirs traditionnels (par exemple, le temps, l'activité et l'expérience) afin de conceptualiser les « loisirs électroniques ». Ensuite, on examine quelles dimensions liées à ces aspects sont importantes pour les « loisirs électroniques » et celles qui

ont perdu toute signification. L'article suggère également quatre nouvelles dimensions requises afin de mieux comprendre les «loisirs électroniques», soit la synchronicité, l'interactivité, l'anonymat et la réalité virtuelle. L'article présente alors quelques arguments sur les associations possibles entre ces dimensions et les aspects fondamentaux des loisirs. Finalement, on traite de la «médiatisation» des loisirs et de certaines orientations possibles pour la recherche future.
